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USTR BARSHEFSKY MEETS WITH STEEL REPRESENTATIVES

United States Trade Representative Charlene Barshefsky met today with representatives of several large U.S. steel companies and the Steelworkers Union to discuss the growing concern of rising U.S. steel imports caused by the collapse of demand and devaluations in Asia and Russia. The U.S. steel industry is critical to the U.S. economy. Steel producers and workers having undertaken massive restructuring and modernization over the last two decades, cannot be asked to carry the burden of the economic crises abroad.

Ambassador Barshefsky welcomed industry and union joint recommendations and pledged a prompt review. She reaffirmed the Administration's "commitment to strong U.S. trade laws designed to prevent injury to U.S. industry and workers from unfair trade practices and from import surges, and to the expeditious and effective enforcement of these laws." Ambassador Barshefsky also reaffirmed the Administration's "commitment to the revitalization and restructuring of the economies in crisis through international assistance, and by calling on their governments to quickly implement necessary economic reforms."

"During my visit to Japan next week, I will have the opportunity to urge Japanese Cabinet members to take decisive steps to reform and revitalize Japan's economy and to open its market. Japan cannot expect to export its way to health. "Ambassador Barshefsky noted that steel is a case in point where Japan's exports to us have grown 114% so far this year (and 153% in the month of June alone). "Japan's government and industry must take responsible and immediate action to deal with the country's domestic issues and thus to help promote regional recovery."

A follow-up meeting was agreed to before the end of September.